

Why I'm Spiritually Dry, Part 1 - Romans 14:1-4 – April 28th, 2013

- Today's teaching will be part one of a new series that I've titled; "Why I'm Spiritually Dry."
 - Here in the fourteenth chapter of Romans, we have what I believe are several reasons that explain why it is we can become spiritually dry.
 - It's not so much "that" we as Christians can become spiritually dry; it's more a matter of "why" we as Christians can become spiritually dry.
- Let me explain, there are those times in our Christian experience when we're bound to go through a desert experience due to the adversity.
 - When that happens, we, for the most part, already know "why" we are in a desert season, and that we're there through no fault of our own.
 - However, there are also those times in our Christian experience when we, because it's our own fault, put ourselves in that desert season.
- Enter the Apostle Paul and this fourteenth chapter of his epistle to the Romans, where he identifies those attitudes that drive us to dryness.
 - These attitudes the Apostle Paul identifies here will not only drive us to dryness spiritually, they will also drive us to arguments relationally.
 - Apparently, such was the case with the early church here in Rome as evidenced by the conflict and controversy they had in their fellowship.
- By way of a preface, it's important to understand a bit of the backstory as it relates to two of the major issues they were having back then.
 - More specifically, they were fighting with each other over issues such as what they would eat or drink, and on what day they would worship.
 - In addressing their issues, there's an unveiling of their sources, which brings us to the first reason why I may be spiritually dry; "legalism."

1. Legalism (Verses 1-2)

- (1) Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. (2) One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables.
- v1 Paul begins by writing how that we are to accept those who are weak in their faith without passing judgment on the "disputable matters."
 - v2 He gives an example in describing one whose faith will allow him to eat everything, while one whose weak in faith eats only vegetables.
 - The reason Paul brings up eating meat or vegetables is because there were those who would not eat meat fearing it was offered to idols.
- First and foremost, I think we'd be grossly remiss were we to not define what the Apostle Paul is referring to as these "disputable matters."
 - Simply put, a disputable matter is something that the Word of God does not address specifically, in that it doesn't say we can or can't do it.
 - This has led to many disputes, about many matters, such that some Christians have the freedom to do certain things, while others do not.
- I find it interesting that Paul would describe the one who does not have this freedom as being weaker in their faith than the one who does.
 - The reason I find this interesting is that it's the polar opposite of how we think as Christians when it comes to those who choose to abstain.
 - By way of example, we tend to see the vegetarian who abstains from eating meat as stronger than those who can't resist eating everything.
- This begs the question of why it is that Paul would say the one whose faith is weak, is the one who will eat only vegetables because of it.
 - I would suggest it's because those who are prone to be strict when it comes to disputable matters have a legalistic attitude towards others.
 - Those who are given over to legalism fancy themselves, as being stronger in their faith by virtue of how they are able to keep certain rules.
- The problem with this is that in so doing, their Christian lives become, as one said, "a got to instead of a get to," and as such they dry up.
 - A Christian given over to legalism no longer enjoys the Christian experience as a loving relationship. It has become a condemning religion.
 - The truth of the matter is, they've downgraded their Christianity to a list of do's and don'ts, thus, it's just a matter of time before they dry up.

2. Judgmentalism (Verses 3-4)

- (3) The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him. (4) Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.
- v3 He says those eating meat must not look down on vegans and vegans must not look down on those who eat meat, as God accepts both.
 - v4 He asks, who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls, and the Lord is able to make him stand.
 - The very fact that Paul would have to write this tells me that they were unnecessarily judging each other, and condescending to the other.
- Given that there's probably not a one of us who has become a vegetarian not wanting to eat meat offered to idols, I'll use the TV instead.
 - Let's suppose, for purpose of discussion, that someone here in our church chooses to completely get rid of their televisions, all five of them.
 - And, the only way we know they've done this is because they've looked down on us, and been judgmental of us, for not getting rid of ours.
- The question becomes, who's right and who's wrong? Is the one who gave up the TV's right, and the one who did not give them up wrong?
 - The fact of the matter is, they're both right and neither of them is wrong but, the one who looks down on and judges the other is very wrong.
 - It's even more wrong for the one who looks down on and judges the other who doesn't get rid of their TV's, to want God to judge them too.
- They want God to judge them and they want them fall, all because they don't do what those with a judgmental attitude think they should do.
 - This would explain why it is that Paul says who are you to judge another's servant when his own master makes him to stand and not fall.
 - In other words, not only are they standing, they're even prospering, this because God accepts them, so much so, they even buy new TV's.
- If you really think about it, the reason the no TV guy got rid of them in the first place was because watching TV was his area of weakness.
 - Again, there's absolutely nothing wrong, and in fact, there's everything right about having rules for yourself in those areas of you are weak.
 - However, don't look down on those of us who are strong in that area you happen to be weak in, and in so doing impose judgment upon us.
- By the way, let me hasten to say that there is a big difference between someone being judgmental, and someone who has good judgment.
 - The litmus test for good judgment or being judgmental is one will be convicting and constructive and the other condemning and destructive.
 - Simply put, in having good judgment I'll build up and encourage others, whereas in being judgmental I'll tear down and discourage others.
- I'll bring today's sermon to a close by asking a question, and please know that it's one for which I ask myself as well as one who has TV's.
 - Could the reason why I'm so spiritually dry be that I've developed a legalistic attitude, looking down on, and being judgmental of someone?